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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1514  
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 6348  
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 3672  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7535  
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 4792  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2044  
RUEHGT/AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA 0596  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 2116  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 3207  
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 1940  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4242  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 4681  
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 9266  
RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO 0910  
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 2077  
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL  
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC  
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/01/2016

TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BL](#)

SUBJECT: THE MEDIA LUNA DECEMBER 1 CIVIC STRIKE

Classified By: CDA Kris Urs for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (U) On December 1 the departments of Santa Cruz, Beni, and Tarija began a one day civic strike in response to frustration with recent GOB moves on a variety of fronts. The strike is also being partially observed in Pando, Cochabamba, and parts of Chuquisaca. The strike is due to end at 6 p.m. As of 4 p.m. there have been no reports of violence. End summary.

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SANTA CRUZ PARTICIPATES MASSIVELY  
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¶2. (C) Eduardo Bowles, Director of Santa Cruz-based El Nuevo Dia newspaper, told Emboff the strike is enjoying massive participation from all sectors of Santa Cruz society and that is peaceful. Earlier today the press reported there would be some MAS-backed counter-protests. Tarija Civic Committee member Amilcar Taboada said that the strike is enjoying outstanding support throughout the whole department, including the Chaco region. Taboada said the strike has been violence free in Tarija. Contacts in Cochabamba report that the strike has received about fifty percent of the population's support. Private business and the prefectural government is closed, but the Cochabamba city government has chosen to remain open. Press reports the strike is has popular support in Beni. The Pando civic committee organized a protest parade in lieu of a strike.

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MILITARY LOCK DOWN  
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¶3. (S) USDAO reports that the Bolivian military is on lock down to prevent the armed forces from supporting the strike.

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PREFECT LOOKS TOWARDS BUSINESS COMMUNITY  
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14. (C) During a thirty minute meeting November 30 on the margins of the CICAD,s 40th session in Santa Cruz, Prefect Ruben Costas assured the DCM that the December 1 civic strike in Santa Cruz would be complete. Costas said that the one day strike had the support of the entire Departmental council, with the exception of the council member from San Julian (a notorious MAS stronghold). He expected that the strike would also be honored in Beni, Tarija and partially in Cochabamba. &Pando opted for an opposition march in lieu of a strike.<sup>8</sup> Costas was not confident that the opposition could continue the pressure after the Friday strike; one idea, he said, was to stage a massive hunger strike starting Monday, December 4. &Our window of opportunity is very short,<sup>8</sup> he said. &By December 15, the entire country will shut down for the Christmas season; if the government has not backed down by then, it will be impossible for the opposition to win,<sup>8</sup> he concluded. Costas said he had begun to approach the Santa Cruz business sector for funding. Organizing a civic strike costs money, he said. &The business elite will benefit from repeal of the recently passed land reform act; they should contribute.<sup>8</sup>

15. (C) While admitting that he is not an expert on the rules for convening alternates to attend the Senate, Costas alleged that recent Senate approval of land reform legislation, the Venezuela/Bolivia Defense agreement, and forty-four new petroleum contracts was undemocratic. Admitting he had no

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proof, Costas said he had not doubt that the single opposition senator and the two opposition alternates who attended the session had been bribed. &The entire incident signals a lack of democratic commitment on the part of the government.<sup>8</sup> Costas asserted that the GOB is pressing forward with plans to concentrate all power in its hands. The governing MAS party must consolidate power before the internal contradictions tear it apart. The prefect said he understands why the USG has taken a low-key approach towards the Morales Government; a more confrontational approach might well be counterproductive. Nevertheless, he said, some elements in Santa Cruz are disheartened by the USG,s failure to confront the Morales Government so far.

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COMMENT  
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16. (C) Embassy contacts say President Morales is trying convene all nine civic committees in Sucre on December 3. Post will continue to monitor the strike and developing events. End comment.  
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